

# COMBINING INQUIRY, LEARNING COMMUNITY AND TOTAL PHYSICAL RESPONSE FOR TEACHING ENGLISH

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## ABSTRACT

This study aims at finding out if the combination of the Inquiry (IQ), Learning Community (LC), and Total Physical Response (TPM) methods of teaching English will be able to improve the performance of the students' English language skills. The study focuses on the students' performance to verbally respond to simple instructions with acceptable actions within the context of the classroom and school environments and to give verbal expression for some simple acts: showing how to do something simple, gesticulating, and giving directions (as stated in KTSP or *Kurikulum Tingkat Satuan Pendidikan* (School Based Curriculum or SBC) in Depdiknas, 2006). In terms of speaking skills, this study concentrates on the pronunciation and comprehension aspects. To achieve the goal of study, an experimental approach with one-group pre-test and post-test design was used. A number of 20 students out of a 58 student population were selected randomly as the sample for treatment. The results showed that the students' comprehension and pronunciation improved significantly (from 34 to 60). In conclusion, the combination of IQ, LC and TPR of teaching did improve the ability of students to respond to simple instructions, and to express simple speech for giving simple directions, gesticulating, and showing how to do something simple. The hypothesis (Ha) of this research is then accepted as the combined teaching method generated greater ability in English than previous methods.

**Key Words:** *Inquiry, Learning-Community, Total Physical Response, Speaking Skill, Pronunciation, Comprehension*

## INTRODUCTION

Speaking and listening are two important skills in communicative language performance. Nunan (1999:237) asserts that the prior experiences of a learner helps to improve his or her performance as a speaker. Setiyadi (2006:125) states that children do a lot of listening before they learn to speak. Richard and Rogers (1986:90) further mention that children develop listening competence before they develop the ability to speak. This idea is then developed by McKay (2006:214) who asserts that the foundation of language learning is in the form of oral language, which consists of listening and speaking. Through oral language, children develop their literacy skills accompanying action.

Referring to the curriculum from the Department of Education and Culture (or Depdiknas, 2006:403), listening and speaking are given the highest priority to be learned by primary school students from grade 4 to grade 6. The objectives of the instructions for English listening and speaking for grade 5 in the first semester are as follows:

- *The students have to be able to verbally respond to any simple instructions with acceptable actions within the classroom context and the school environment* (Grade V, Semester 1: ref. SK/KD: 1/1.1)
- *To speak to accompany actions in an acceptable manner, which involves the following speech acts as: giving examples to do something, gesticulation, and giving directions* (Grade V, Semester 1: ref. SK/KD: 2/2.1)

Nevertheless, the results of a preliminary study from the author's survey from April 14-15, 2013, it showed that the students were not able to 'verbally respond to simple instructions and to demonstrate any expression of the speech acts' mentioned above. In addition, the author found that the process of language learning in the classroom was ineffective due to the minimum use of language learning strategies, methods and techniques. In order to solve such problems, the author planned to carry out an experiment on the application of the following methods, Inquiry (IQ), Learning Community (LC) and Total Physical Response (TPR) combined together in one teaching process.

The main research question of this study is: "Does taching English using the combination of Inquiry (IQ), Learning Community (LC) and Total Physical Response (TPR) methods lead to greater development of students' English ability than teaching them using other traditional

methods?”. This main question is broken down into the following sub-questions:

- Can the combination of IQ, LC and TPR methods for teaching English lead to developing the students’ ability to respond to simple instructions in English more than other traditional methods used for teaching English in a primary school in Aceh?
- Can the combination of IQ, LC and TPR methods for teaching English lead to developing the students’ ability to perform such speech acts as *giving examples to do something*, *gesticulating* and *giving directions* in English more than other traditional methods used for teaching English in a primary schools in Aceh?

Based on the stated research questions, the main research objective of this study is to find out if the combination of IQ, LC and TPR methods can lead to develop the students’ ability to speak and to respond to simple instructions in English more than the traditional method used in a Primary school in Aceh. This main objective is expected to be answered through the following sub-objectives:

- To find out if the combination of IQ, LC and TPR methods of teaching English can lead to develop the students’ ability to respond to simple instructions in English more than the traditional method used in a primary school in Aceh..
- To find out if the combination of IQ, LC and TPR methods leads to developing the students’ English ability in expressing such speech acts as *giving examples to do something*, *gesticulation* and *giving directions* more than the traditional method used in a primary school in Aceh.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Information on the three theories of Inquiry (IQ), Learning Community (LC), and Total Physical Response (TPR) methods is provided below to support this research.

*Inquiry* (IQ) is the core of the Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) process. Galileo Education Work (as cited in Alberta, 2004:1) stated, “Inquiry is the dynamic process of being open to wonder and puzzlement and coming to know and understand the world”. This knowledge may be new to the students and may be used to answer a question, to develop a solution or to support a position or point of view. The knowledge is usually presented to others and may result in some

sort of action. Inquiry-based learning is a process where students are involved in their learning, formulate questions, investigate widely and then build new understandings, meanings and knowledge (Alberta Learning, 2004:11). Referring to this statement, Vygotsky (1978, as cited in Chambers, 2002:8) believed that children learn through interactions and dialogues when engaged in socially mediated activities.

Furthermore, Scardamalia and Bereiter (1994, as cited in Bielaczyc & Collins, 1997:2) explain that *Learning Community* (LC) is a group of people who are actively engaged in LC. In recent years in America there has developed a “Learning-Communities” approach to education. In LC, the goal is to advance the collective knowledge and in that way to support the growth of individual knowledge. In this regard, Collins (1997) states that LC exists when a group of people commit themselves to continual learning and to supporting others in continual learning. LC stimulates ongoing, collective inquiry into teaching and learning. It involves everyone in highly visible learning experiences who learn from each other, with each other, and for each other, who share the knowledge that is gained, the excitement and challenges that come with learning difficult material, and the benefits learning produces.

In LC approach, the goal is to foster a culture of learning, where both individuals and the community as a whole are learning how to learn. Furthermore, Bielaczyc and Collins (1997:4) said that members of the community should share their individual efforts. The activities in LC must provide a means for:

- both individual development and collaborative collection of knowledge,
- sharing knowledge and skills amongst members of the community, and
- making learning processes visible and articulated.

The goals of collegial forms of professional development are to encourage greater interaction between teachers, peer-based learning through mentoring, and sharing skills, experience and solutions to common problems. Thus, Richards and Farrell (2005:12) have asserted that the school might be viewed as LC.

LC approach tends to use a variety of learning activities, including individual and group research, class discussions, cross-age tutoring, working together to create artifacts or presentations that make public both what is learned and ways of learning, and collaborative problem solving where students take on particular roles toward a common end.

For instance, social learning techniques such as cooperative learning and collaborative learning (Bielaczyc & Collins, 1997:4). Successful collaborative learning cannot be taken for granted and must be carefully planned and monitored (Richards & Farrell, 2005:12). In addition, McMillan and Chavis (1986) have stated that there are four key factors that define a sense of community, namely: membership influence, fulfillment of individual needs, shared events, and emotional connections.

According to DuFour (2001), the main principle supported in teaching using LC approach is developing others in creating an appropriate context for learning. It is context — the programs, procedures, beliefs, expectations, and habits that constitute the norm for a given school — that plays the largest role in determining whether professional development efforts will have an impact on that school. DuFour (2001:14-15) then put forward that specific principles for such development to follow certain steps as set out below:

1. Provide time for collaboration in the school day and in the school year. Providing time for teachers to work together that does not require keeping students at home or an infusion of new resources.
2. Identify critical questions to guide the work of the collaboration teams. The impact of providing time for teachers to engage in collective inquiry will be determined to a great extent by the nature of the questions teachers are considering. Principals must help teams frame questions that focus on locally relevant critical issues of teaching and learning.
3. Ask teams to create products as a result of their collaborations. The best way to help teachers use their collaborative time productively is to ask them to produce and present artifacts in response to the critical questions they are considering. Examples might include statements of student outcomes by units of instruction, development of new units to address gaps between state standards and local curricula, creation of common assessments and rubrics, articulation of team protocols or norms to guide the interactions of team members, or formulation of improvement plans based on analysis of student achievement data.
4. Insist that teams identify and pursue specific (student) achievement goals. The driving force behind the effort to create a collaborative culture must be improved results. Principals can foster improved results when they ask teaching teams to identify and pursue specific, measurable student achievement goals.

5. Provide teams with relevant data and information. When every teacher has access to information on their students' performance in meeting agreed upon standards for valid assessment in comparison to students of other teachers trying to achieve the same standards, both individual teachers and teams improve their effectiveness.

TPR is one of the methods developed by James Asher, a Professor of Psychology at San Jose University in California USA to aid learning language. This method attempts to encourage the students to listen and respond to spoken target language commands from their teachers. Richards & Rodgers (2001:87) states that TPR is a language teaching method built around the coordination of speech and action. It attempts to teach language through physical (motor) activity.

Furthermore, Larsen-Freeman (1986:109) calls TPR a natural method, which means that the second language teaching and learning should reflect naturalistic processes of first language learning. She then explained that three central processes occur. First, listening competence is developed before children develop their ability to talk. At the early stage of first language acquisition, children can understand complex utterances that they cannot spontaneously produce or imitate. Second, comprehension is the student's ability in listening comprehension that is acquired since the students are required to respond physically to spoken language in the form of commands. Third is speech; when a foundation in listening and comprehension has been established, speech evolves naturally and effortlessly out of it.

Larsen-Freeman (2000) explains that the advocates of TPR believe that language learners should understand the target language before speaking. Language learners can learn through observing actions as well as by performing the actions themselves. By observing the actions and performing them they will understand the language they are learning. The meaning of words can be understood by making associations between the utterances they hear and the actions they are observing. The meaning of words will be internalized by performing the actions in accordance with commands.

Larsen-Freeman (1986:177) has further stated that having fun makes language learners interested in learning (the foreign language). This is a primary principle of this method. The important principle in learning a foreign language is that the learners should have fun. In TPR the fun is provided through physical activities which are a means to reduce the stress people feel when studying a foreign language.

In addition, according to Larsen-Freeman (2000), TPR also deals with error correction. When a learner makes an error, the teacher repeats the command while acting it out correctly so that the actions can be followed and the error corrected whilst still having fun.

## **METHOD**

This present study is approached quantitatively by means of an experimental design of one group pre-test and post-test design. According to Asner-Self and Schreiber (2011:163), the one group pre-test and post-test design adds an observation of the group before the intervention. Cohen, Manion, and Morison (2005:213) explain that the extraneous variables which are outside the experimenter's control in one group pre-test x post-test design threaten to invalidate the research effort. Therefore, it may be assumed that this kind of research method is in line with the main objective of this study, that is to find out if the combination of IQ, LC and TPR in spoken English performance. Or, in other words, it may be said that such a combination of methods may positively develop the ability or performance of the students in spoken English.

The population of this study is the fifth grade students of SD Negeri 1, Laut Tawar, Takengon. This school grade has 29 male students and 29 female student. So, the total population is 58 students, out of which 35% or 20 students were then taken as the sample. The sample for the study was chosen by using a simple random sampling method which means that each member of the population under study had an equal chance of being selected (Cohen, Manion & Morison, 2007:100). According to Asner-Self and Schreiber (2011:87), simple random sampling occurs when all members of the population have the same probability of being selected. The author took both classes of the fifth grade as the grade has two classes, Va and Vb. The author obtained an alphabetized list of all students in each class and then took the first 10 odd numbers of the Va class and the first 10 even numbers of the Vb class from a random number table. Next she went down the alphabetized lists and give consecutive numbers to each student, and lastly, she selected all the students according to the random numbers generated.

A research instrument, which plays an important role in research, is used as a tool to collect data (Arikunto, 2010:151). Similarly, Sugiyono (2006:147) explains in a more comprehensive manner that a research

instrument is a tool which is used to measure the natural phenomena and social phenomena that are being observed. In this research the data is collected by means of a test instrument.

With regards to the quantitative design, the data is taken from pre-test and post-test scores from the sampled students before and after the treatment. Chessman (2013) states that an achievement test is a knowledge based and systematic procedure for measuring a set of learning objectives.

In relation to the research design used in this research (one group pretest x post-test design), the author gave one pre-test and one post-test to measure the listening and speaking abilities of the sampled students. In part one, the students focussed on learning vocabulary in terms of nouns and verbs. The teacher provided pictures as media for the teaching-learning process. The students got new vocabulary knowledge by discussion in groups. Furthermore, to reinforce the comprehension of the students in listening, the teacher gave instructions verbally and the students listened to the instructions. And then in part two, the teacher measured the students performance in speaking ability through giving commands to the peer students or to the groups. Both tests consisted of several topics related to the development of ability to verbally respond to simple instructions with acceptable actions within the context of classroom and the school environment. The materials for the test were adapted from relevant internet sources and books. In addition, the author also adopted scoring the systems from McKay (2006:290-291) to assess the progress of students after each treatment.

The author collected data from the pre-test and the post-test. The pre-test was given before the treatment by way of an oral test. The pre-test included responding to instructions with appropriate actions for doing something, gesticulating, and giving directions. The treatment process was given for six sessions, each of the six sessions followed the same process, beginning with learning vocabulary of nouns and simple verbs for doing something, gesticulating and giving directions. This was important for improving the students comprehension. To reinforce the instructions, commands were used to direct behaviour, reverse roles, and produce action sequences. The post-test was given after treatments using the same procedures as in pre-test. All tests were scored by the author. The data for the study was gathered through "spoken language performance tests". These tests of listening and speaking abilities were conducted to test the students comprehension

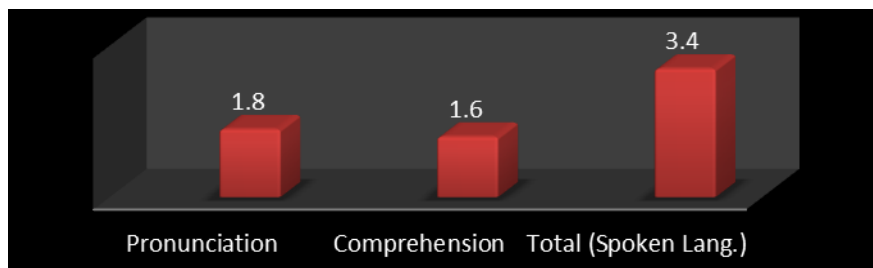


and performance related to simple instructions with acceptable actions within the context of classroom and of the school environment and the ability to express in speech directions for doing something: gesticulation and directions. Both tests were conducted after each session of the treatment to record the students learning progress.

This study used simple statistical descriptive methods to display the data. Sugiyono (2009:209) states that there is no significance test for use with descriptive statistics. He adds that if the researcher does not intend to make a generalization so that there would then be no error in the generalization. The data of this study were analyzed and displayed using an Excel software program and an SPSS software program.

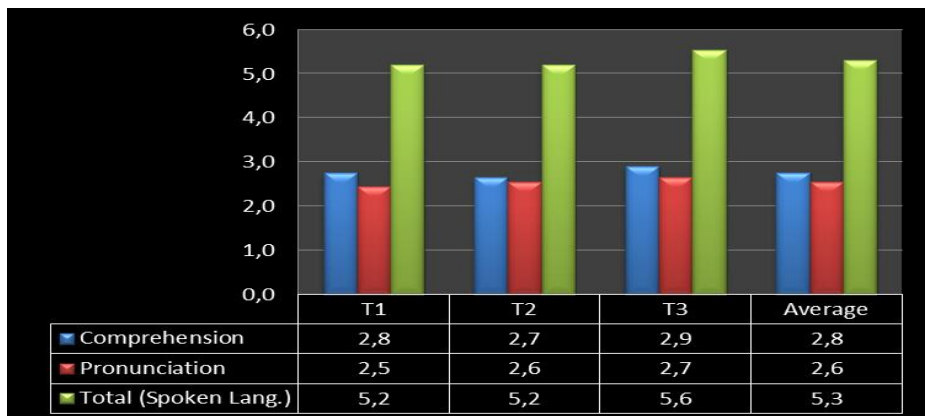
## **FINDINGS**

The data from the scores for each student are summarised in Figure 1.



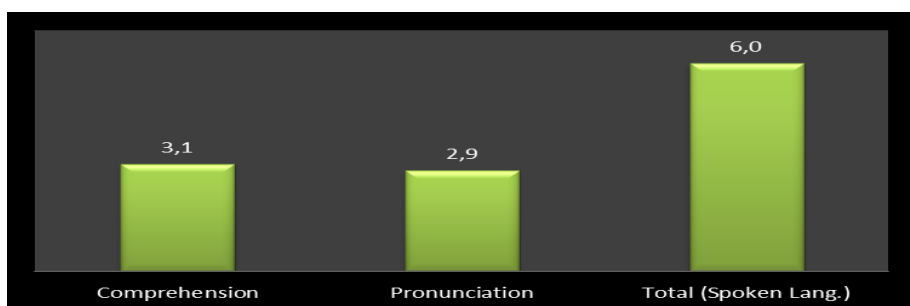
**Figure 1.** Students' pretest scores for spoken language component.

Figure 1 shows that the students' average spoken language scores (focussed only on pronunciation and comprehension aspects) prior to the treatment were 1.8 and 1.6, respectively, with total of 3.4. This value indicated a relatively low performance. However, the values gradually increased during the treatment process as shown in Figure 2.



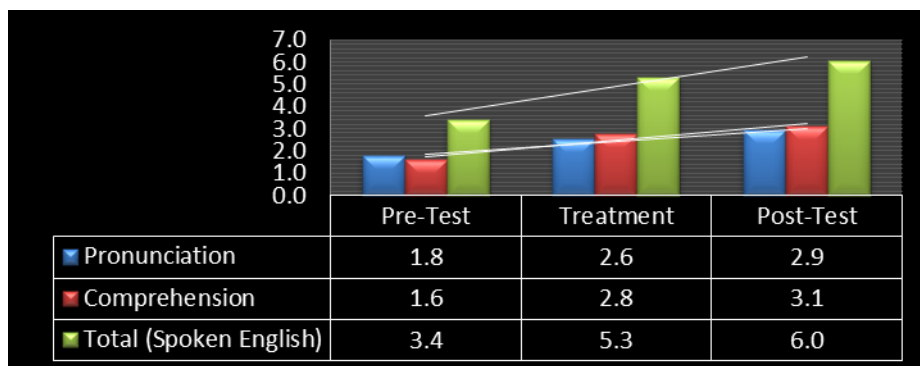
**Figure 2.** Students' progress achievement during treatment process.

Figure 2 shows the results of the students's progress after each stage of treatment. Overall there were six meetings, two meetings per treatment. The tests were given at the end of second meeting of each treatment. The students' achievement in both comprehension and pronunciation gradually increased from one treatment to the next. However, the comprehension results declined a little bit after the second treatment but rose again after the third treatment. The regression after the second treatment was due to using more difficult material. During the third treatment the students achievement went back to normal and increased by 0.1 point as they were now familiar with the new material. The average score achieved within the treatment process was 5.4 (comprehension=2.8, pronunciation=2.6).



**Figure 3.** Students' post-test scores for spoken language component.

Figure 3 represents the achievement scores from the post test, which was given as a formative assessment to see the end result of treatment process after the sixth treatment for research.



**Figure 4.** The comparative score of achievement among pre-test, treatment, and post test.

Figure 4 signifies the comparison of scores achieved from the pre-test, treatment, and post-treatment tests. This clearly illustrates that the scores of students' spoken language performance increased significantly after the teaching process was completed using the combination of IQ, LC and TPR processes.

## CONCLUSIONS

Based on the test scores, it was found that the students' spoken language performance increased after being given the combination of Inquiry (IQ), Learning Community (LC), and Total Physical Response (TPR) methods (average score of pretest was 3.4, and increased to 6.0 in post-test). Most of the students, 18 all together, improved their pronunciation, while only two students did not show any improvement. As in comprehension, nearly all of the 20 students showed improvement, with only three students, who scored well in the pre-test, got the same score in the post-test.

Second, the combination of IQ, LC, and TPR methods was successfully implemented in an elementary classroom environment to improve the students' English performance. This indicates that classroom instruction based on a combination of methods especially combining IQ, LC, and TPR methods can produce better performance of English.

Third, the combination of IQ, LC, and TPR methods successfully improved the students' comprehension and pronunciation. Thus, the combination of IQ, LC, and TPR methods has been shown to be a

successful combination in this study and could result in success in future Speaking English lessons.

Fourth, the application of the methods has developed not only the students' teamwork and responsibility in mastering learning materials for spoken language performance, but also improved their self-confidence and awareness of being in control of their own learning and, hence, they were able to perform well.

In conclusion, the result of research showed that the application of combination of IQ, LC, and TPR does lead to improving the ability of primary school students both in terms of responding to simple instructions in English and in expressing certain speech acts (giving examples to do something, gesticulation and giving directions) in English. This finding confirms that the research questions of this study are proved. In addition, the status of the hypothesis has now changed from 'hypothetical' to 'thesis', which means that the application of the combination of IQ, LC, and TPR provides positive impact to the development of elementary school students' English ability.

The results of this study seem not only applicable for young learners but also for adults, because adults, too, should have fun to reduce the stress some people feel when learning a second language. Further studies with combinations of methods are suggested to take place over longer treatment periods with various learning materials and other types of spoken language performances that can be fun for young learners.

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